DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 479 EA 026 179

AUTHOR West, Mel
TITLE Re-Thinking School Management and Structure--The Role of School Improvement. Pre-Conference Draft.
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1994). Printed on colored paper.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperative Planning; *Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; School Administration; School Organization; *School Restructuring
IDENTIFIERS England; Wales

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on two aspects of the Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) Project, a model implemented in England and Wales since the passage of the 1988 Education Reform Act. First, it offers an overview of those management arrangements, or conditions, that the project has sought to enhance in participating schools. These conditions for school improvement are: (1) a commitment to staff development; (2) practical efforts to involve staff, students, and the community in school policies and decisions; (3) transformational leadership approaches; (4) effective coordination strategies; (5) proper attention to the potential benefits of inquiry and reflection; and (6) a commitment to collaborative planning activity. The paper also presents vignettes from five secondary schools to illustrate how participating schools found additional pressure to restructure. As the schools engaged in long-term, systematic improvement efforts, they became more aware of the shortcomings of their inherited school structures. The schools encountered the following primary structural/management problems: (1) the gap between the senior management team and the school; (2) the mismatch between school goals/priorities and senior management roles; (3) confusion about management and leadership; (4) the relationship between delegation and empowerment; (5) time to manage; and (6) the gap between policy and practice. Six propositions about the role of school improvement in restructuring are offered. One figure is included. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 375 479

Re-thinking School Management and Structure - the role of School Improvement

Mel West

University of Cambridge Institute of Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. West

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper prepared for a symposium on 'School Improvement and National Reform' at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, 6th April 1994

Pre Conference Draft:

Not to be quoted without the permission of the author

Correspondence:
Mel West,
University of Cambridge institute of Education
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge
CB2 2BX UK
Tel: 0223-69631 Fax: 0223-324421

EA 026 179

Cambridge School Development Group, 1994

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

This paper focuses on two aspects of the IQEA Project. First, it offers an overview of those management arrangements (which in the project we call *conditions*) which we have been seeking to enhance in our work with the schools. Currently we identify six conditions for school improvement, but we have modified and continue to evolve our thinking about these as the project develops. So, while we are confident that all these areas do have a significant influence on school's capacity for improvement work, the list is not considered final or complete.

Second, there is an attempt to describe how schools in the project have found that working on the conditions often creates additional pressure to restructure. The need to restructure is not attributed to the project itself - there are a number of internal and external forces for reform. But it does seem that schools which engage in long-term, systematic improvement effort become more sharply aware of current structural problems and also unleash new pressures for change. Though the project involves primary and special schools, in this instance only secondary schools are considered. This is because the issues facing all schools since the 1988 Education Reform Act are most readily identified in the larger and (typically) more bureaucratic cultures of the secondary school.

Those wishing to read a fuller account of what has been taking place within the schools themselves will find this treated at greater length in:

Ainscow, M. and Hopkins, D., 'Understanding the Moving School' in Southworth, G (Ed) (in press) *Readings in Primary School Development*, Falmer;

Hopkins, D., Ainscow, M. and West, M. (1994) *School Improvement in an Era of Change*, Cassell;

West, M. 'School Improvement as Staff Development' - the Thurston Project, in Bradley et al (Eds) (1994) *Developing Teachers Developing schools*, David Fulton

School Management Structures and Processes

Historically, the organisational structure in British secondary schools has been developed as much as a salary device as a deliberate arrangement for co-ordinating the schools. The formula for determining the number of teachers (pre 1988) to be employed in a particular school also indicated the number of "allowances" to be made available, though there were marginal differences of application between LEAs. In effect, this meant that as schools increased in size the number of 'promoted' posts increased too, and these posts represented an entitlement to given levels of earnings for given proportions of teachers, rather than roles specifically designed to fulfil particular management needs within the school organisation. Two sorts of 'promoted' post were most common. Those that were justified on a 'bottom-up' basis - such as heads of subject or department - when the numbers of teachers working in a particular curriculum area tended to determine the status and salary of the curriculum leader in that area. And those that were 'top-down', beginning with the collections of deputy-headteachers' schools amassed during the seventies, as the average size of secondary schools increased, and expanding during the eighties to take in a new group of senior managers, most often called 'co-ordinators', whose existence related to a range of specific projects and initiatives, but where the relationship of the particular 'project' to the wider management processes of the school was often unspecified.

One of the more problematic aspects of these structures, which were often further complicated by the protection of posts during rationalisation and closure programmes, was the gap which could frequently be discerned between the top-down and bottom-up constituencies, a gap which perhaps more than any other factor contributed to the widening of the rhetoric - reality debate. The "top-down" post-holders produced more and better policies for the school, but unfortunately had difficulty getting these 'across the gap' and into classrooms. Meanwhile, at classroom level, single-subject concerns tended to outweigh cross-curricular initiatives. In a very real sense such school structures became disconnected, and were unable to offer appropriate homes to the many decisions which must be made each day.

The 1988 Education Reform Act thus found many secondary schools ill-equipped for the challenges of self-management, since few schools had been 'designed' or structured to be 'managed'. This underlines a second area of difficulty, the fact that many senior staff in schools had only a partially developed understanding of the management role itself. It has been noted elsewhere (Fidler and Bowles (1989), West and Ainscow (1991)) that the 1988

Act raised questions about whether schools ever had been "managed" as such, or were simply organisations where some of the techniques of management were starting to be employed. Certainly, and almost overnight, schools that had been accustomed to administering externally determined management policies, whilst managing internally generated curriculum developments, found themselves in a new arena. In future, they would be expected to administer a curriculum framework which was largely determined at a national level, whilst managing the school as an institution on the basis of internally generated management structures and processes.

It is clear that this shift towards "the school in the marketplace" brought with it significant new challenges for senior staff - challenges which must be met if the survival of the school is to be assured. Nevertheless, it is easier to make lists of what these new challenges are than to develop structures and ways of working which will deal with them. It is not surprising, therefore, that there has been a period of reconceptualising and restructuring which, as yet, does not point clearly to any one new dominant form of school organisation. It is becoming clear that some schools have been reluctant to acknowledge this challenge, and have struggled to maintain what are increasingly inappropriate management arrangements. There are also some schools which have plunged into radical reorganisations, changing structures, roles and methods of working, but taking this reorganisation to be an end in itself, rather than seeing it as a process which needs to be carried forward in tandem with a review of the school's own purposes, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

What is important here is the realisation, new to many schools, that organisation is a means to the end of school performance. Organisational structures should facilitate the achievement of school and individual goals by

- clarifying authority and accountability patterns,
- grouping related activities around major school goal areas,
- clarifying teacher relationships and expectations,
- distributing resources (including the authority to act) in a way which supports the achievement of school goals.

For many secondary schools in England and Wales this means thinking much more carefully about the links between purposes and structure, structure, staffing and structure and teacher behaviour in the classroom. It will also mean thinking hard about management - for if structure is the vehicle in which each school makes its journey, management involves

learning to drive that vehicle, sometimes faster, sometimes slower, but always in control of the steering.

These two separate, but related, areas of school structure and school management have been identified in the IQEA Project by the term 'Management arrangements'. Of course, we recognise that the management arrangements are only one component of a school improvement model. Reduced to its simplest form, the model which we have been using as a conceptual map within the IQEA Project is set out in FIG. 1.

This model demonstrates what we take to be the key relationships in the school improvement equation. It locates the quality of pupil experience as both the start point for and the major outcome from improvement effort, identifying the school's goals and priorities as emerging from scrutiny of current outcomes. In this way, the areas schools select to work on are grounded in the real experiences and needs of pupils. The extent to which changes in goals or priorities can lead to an increase in the quality of experience is determined by two mediating variables, on the one hand the management arrangements referred to above, and on the other the knowledge and skills which teachers bring to their classroom related tasks.

The relationships we describe in this model explain why, whilst not neglecting classroom related factors, we have within the IQEA Project deliberately addressed the school's 'management arrangements' as major determinants of school performance. In particular, we have been keen to discover whether the management arrangements promote conditions within the school which enhance its capacity for sustained, focused improvement effort. This is particularly important because difficulties often occur for both individual teachers and the school when development work begins. Teachers for example, may be faced with acquiring new teaching skills or with mastering new curriculum material. The school as a consequence may be forced into new ways of working that are incompatible with existing organizational structures. This phase of 'destabilization' or 'internal turbulence' is as predictable as it is uncomfortable. Further, research studies have found that (e.g. Huberman and Miles 1984, Louis and Miles 1990) without a period of destabilization, long lasting change is unlikely to occur.

The conditions which have interested us, therefore, are those which result in the creation of opportunities for staff in the school to feel clearer about purposes and priorities and lead to a greater sense of confidence and empowerment. In seeking to identify such conditions, we have been guided by the work of others and by our own accumulating empirical evidence, and the list continues to evolve. At present however, our best estimate of those conditions

which underpin improvement effort, and so therefore represent key management arrangements, can be broadly stated as

- a commitment to staff development
- practical efforts to involve staff, students and the community in school policies and decisions
- 'transformational' leadership approaches
- effective co-ordination strategies
- proper attention to the potential benefits of enquiry and reflection
- a commitment to collaborative planning activity

COMPONENTS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

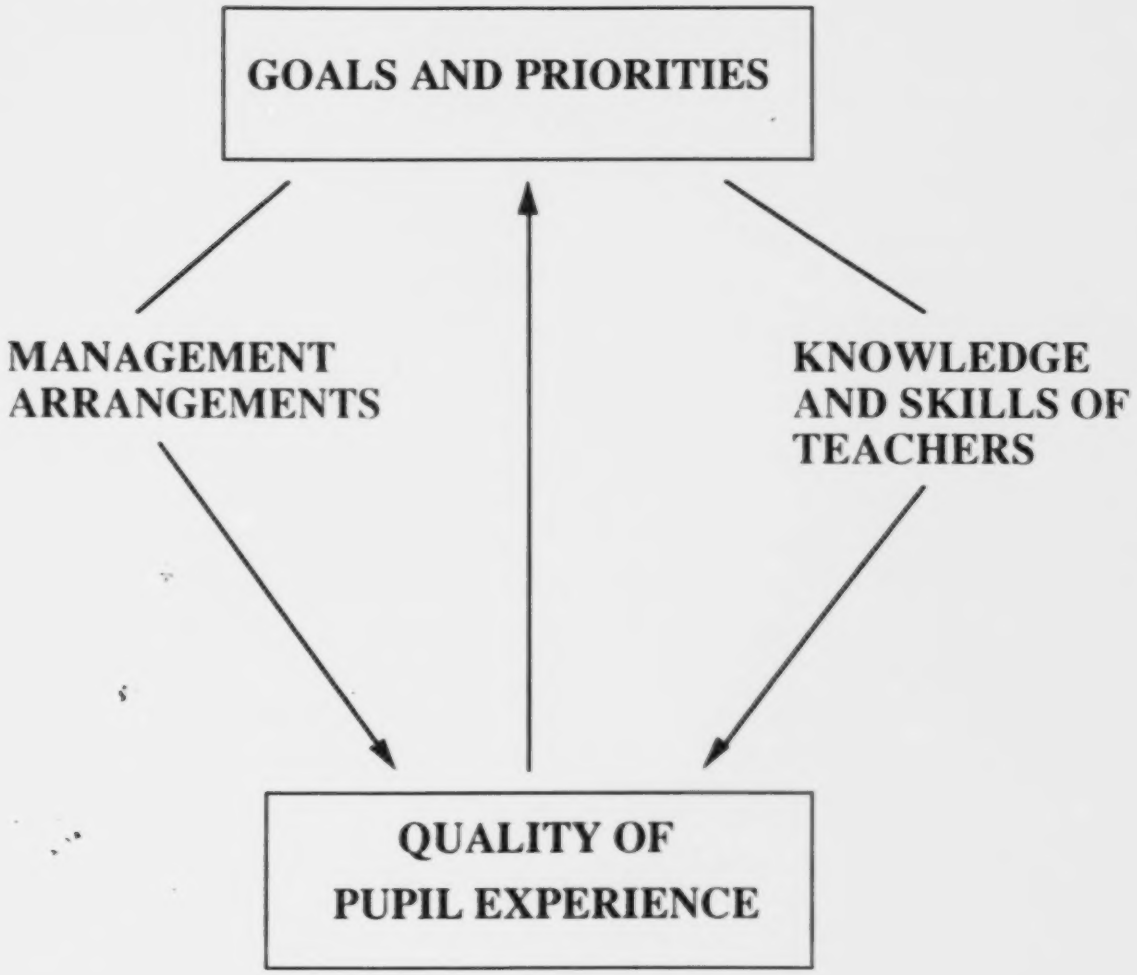

FIGURE 1

The conditions for school improvement

Staff Development Policies

Staff development is inextricably linked to school development (Joyce and Showers 1984, Joyce 1992). In the quest for school improvement powerful strategies are required that integrate these two areas in a way that is mutually supportive. In turn, powerful strategies that link staff development to school improvement need to fulfil two essential criteria: first of all they need to relate to and enhance ongoing practice in the school and, secondly, they should link to and strengthen other internal features of the school's organization. Unless the staff development programme leads towards overall school improvement then it tends to become a series of marginal activities (Hewton 1988).

Further, it seems reasonable to assume that improving the conditions for supporting *the learning of teachers* in a school will have an impact on the conditions they provide for their pupils. To this end it is important that a school has a well thought-out policy for teacher development. This must go beyond the traditional patterns by which teachers attend external courses or, more recently, the use of one-shot school-based events. It is vital that strategies for staff development should be *linked to school improvement.* As such these should be concerned with the development of the staff as a team, as well as with the evolution of its thinking and the practice of individuals.

In our work with IQEA schools, we have accordingly been keen to promote a systematic and integrated approach to staff development, establishing that the professional learning of teachers is central to our notion of school improvement, and that the classroom is as important a centre for teacher development as the training room.

Involvement

In the research literature on effective schools there is strong evidence (see for examples Ainscow and Muncey (1989), Reynolds (1991), Stoll (1991) that success is associated with a sense of identity and involvement that extends beyond the teaching staff. This involves the pupils, parents and, indeed, other members of the school's community. It does seem that some schools are able to create positive relationships with their wider community that help to create a supportive climate for learning. Though it may be difficult for a particular school to establish whole-community links overnight, it does seem reasonable to expect that strategies

for the active involvement of two key groups, pupils and parents, should be more straightforward. Within the IQEA schools, we have tended therefore to focus on ways in which these two groups can be brought more directly into the school's planning and decision-making processes. (There are however, some examples of more ambitious programmes for community involvement).

The start-point for such involvement is the adoption of clear policies which encourage participation by the various stakeholder groups. There also need to be procedures and methods for bringing such participation into the school - the onus should not be left on the groups themselves. Rather, methods for gaining access to the school's deliberations need to be published and supported by appropriate attitudes towards potential partners from *all members of staff.*

Leadership Practices

There is considerable evidence in the studies of school effectiveness that leadership is a key element in determining school success. Perhaps such studies have overemphasized 'leadership' at the expense of 'management' (our own experience suggests that these are both important characteristics of the effective school) but they do underline the cultural significance this term holds for teachers. Most recently, studies of leadership in schools have tended to move away from the identification of this function exclusively with the headteacher, and have begun to address how leadership can be made available throughout a management structure and at all levels in the school community. This shift in emphasis has been accompanied by shift in thinking about leadership itself, with an increasing call for 'transformational' approaches which distribute and empower, rather than 'transactional' approaches which sustain traditional (and broadly bureaucratic) concepts of hierarchy and control (Beare et al 1989, Murphy 1991).

Within the IQEA Project we have deliberately set out to promote discussions about leadership style within participating schools, and to help staff from different levels in the school to share perceptions of how leadership operates. Such discussions have identified a number of key aspects of the leadership role. The first underlines the responsibility of school leaders in establishing a clear 'vision' or set of purposes for the school. The methods through which the vision is developed seem to be as important as the vision itself in generating staff commitment (Louis and Miles 1990).

The second relates to the way individual knowledge, skills and experience are harnessed, and the extent to which the school is able to transcend traditional notions of hierarchy or role in bringing together the 'best team for the job'. Leadership which arises from relevant knowledge or experience seems to be more successful than leadership stemming from authority. A third aspect is the way leadership is used in group or team meetings. Leader behaviour is obviously an important determinant of group effectiveness, but a strong commitment to the quality of relationships within the group can sometimes lead to over-cohesiveness, with a corresponding decline in the quality of the critical thinking which individuals bring to the group (Janis 1982).

Fourthly, we have been keen to explore with participating schools the opportunities for 'spreading' the leadership function throughout the staff group. This means accepting that leadership is a function to which many staff contribute, rather than a set of responsibilities vested in a small number of individuals or jobs.

Co-ordination Strategy

In the literature on educational management (e.g. Weick, 1985) schools are sometimes referred to as 'loosely-coupled systems'. This loose-coupling occurs because schools consist of units, processes, actions and individuals that tend to operate in isolation from one another. Loose-coupling is also encouraged by the goal ambiguity that characterises schooling. Despite the rhetoric of curriculum aims and objectives, schools consist of groups of people who may have very different values and, indeed, beliefs about the purposes of schooling.

We have therefore identified the school's capacity to co-ordinate the actions of teachers behind agreed policies or goals as an important factor in promoting change. In our work with the IQEA Project schools, we have pursued a number of strategies which, we have found, improve the quality of co-ordination. At the core of such strategies are communication systems and procedures, and the ways in which groups can be created and sustained to co-ordinate improvement effort across a range of levels or departments. Of particular importance are specific strategies for ensuring that *all* staff are kept informed about development priorities and activities, as this is information vital to informed self-direction. We have also found that awareness amongst staff of one another's responsibilities cannot always be assumed - indeed overlaps, both planned and unplanned, need particularly sensitive handling.

A further factor is the "informal" organization - all schools are made up of a number of informal or self-selected groupings which rarely coincide with formal work units. The attitudes and behaviours adopted by these groups often have a profound effect on the individual's willingness to undertake formal tasks. As a consequence, it is important not to overlook the impact of informal organization on formal structures, and a co-ordination strategy needs to take account of informal contacts which influence (and can often contribute directly to) the quality of effort.

Establishing a co-operative way of working is not a simple matter, not least because it is necessary to do so in ways that do not reduce the discretion of individual teachers. Teaching is a complex and often unpredictable business that requires a degree of improvisation. Teachers must have sufficient autonomy to make instant decisions that take account of the individuality of their pupils and the uniqueness of every encounter that occurs. What is needed, therefore, is a well co-ordinated, co-operative style of working that gives individual teachers the confidence to improvise in a search for the most appropriate responses to the situations they meet. In other words, we are seeking to create a more tightly coupled system without losing loose coupling benefits (West and Ainscow 1991)

Using Enquiry and Reflection

As we have argued elsewhere, national reforms in the education system of England and Wales have produced unprecedented pressures for change at the level of the school. Changes in curriculum context, processes and assessment have been enshrined in legislation - requiring adoption at a pace that many schools feel is beyond their capacity. In addition to creating a potentially de-skilling context in which individual teachers must work, the logistics of implementing these changes have proved a severe test for even the most confident of management teams. So much so, it may seem strange to be arguing that schools should actively adopt a focus upon school improvement activities at a time when many teachers are finding that all their time and energies are consumed in trying to assimilate into their schools the range of 'unavoidable' changes currently required.

However, we have observed that those schools which recognize that enquiry and reflection (Willms 1992) are important processes in school improvement find it easier to sustain improvement effort around established priorities, and are better placed to monitor the extent to which policies actually deliver the intended outcomes for pupils, even in these times of enormous change.

Ironically however, we have found that information gathered by outsiders, be they inspectors or consultants, is often seen as having more significance than information which is routinely available to those within the school community. Further, we have observed that where schools understand the potential of internally generated information about progress or difficulties, they are better placed to exploit opportunities and to overcome problems (Wilson and Corcoran 1988).

A major area of focus, therefore, in our work with IQEA Project schools has been to review the use currently made of, and to consider the opportunities for improved future use of school-based data. In adopting this focus, we have tried to remain aware that it is sensible to work with questions that need to be answered, with methods that are feasible and neither intrude on nor disrupt the school's patterns of activity. Within these parameters, we have urged participating schools to adopt a systematic approach to information collection, analysis and interpretation, particularly where information about the *impact*, rather than the implementation, of improvement programmes is wanted (Levine and Lezotte 1990). We have also encouraged schools to involve all staff in this information management process - the data routinely available to staff and the 'sense' they make of it is a potentially important aid to decision-making. Of course, where a school begins to acknowledge enquiry and reflection as forces for improvement, it is vital to ensure that there are appropriate safeguards so that confidential or sensitive information is properly handled.

Collaborative Planning

The quality of school-level planning has been identified as a major factor in many studies of school effectiveness. Such studies have also identified the nature and quality of schools goals as important. Purkey and Smith (1983), for example, list both collaborative planning and clear goals as key process dimensions. Caldwell and Spinks (1988) advocate goal-setting and planning as two of the phases of the Collaborative School Management model which emerged from the ERASP project, linking these two activities within one cycle of the management process. Similar linkage can be found in the writings of Louis and Miles (1990) and Snyder and Anderson (1986).

Our own experiences also lead us to see links between the way planning is carried forward in the school and the school's capacity to engage in development work. However, we have also noted that there is rather more to successful planning than simply producing a development plan - indeed often the quality of the 'plan' as a written document is a very misleading guide

to its influence on the course of events - it is the link between planning and action which in the end justifies the effort we put into planning activities. This practical focus on the impact of planning rather than the technical merits of different planning systems or approaches has led us to stress a number of points when working with IQEA Project schools on this condition.

The school's improvement plans need to be clearly linked to the school's vision for the future. Indeed, the notion of priorities for planning arise from the vision, and where there is a lack of congruence between the school's long term goals and a particular initiative, it is hard to build commitment amongst staff. One way of tying together school and individual goals is through widespread involvement in the planning process. In some ways, involvement in planning activity is more important than producing plans - it is through collective planning that goals emerge, differences can be resolved and a basis for action created. The 'plan' is really a by-product from this activity, and will almost always need to be revised, often several times. The benefits of the planning activity however, will often outlast the currency of the plan, offering a level of shared understanding which is a pre-requisite for widespread empowerment.

Working on the conditions - Examples from the Schools

Though we find it helpful to isolate the conditions for study and training purposes, since the IQEA schools are pursuing 'live' improvement projects these separations cannot be sustained in practice. Project schools work on several conditions simultaneously, though at a given point in time one may receive particular attention. The following vignettes from schools engaging with improvement initiatives therefore, reflect this integration of two or more conditions, but must nevertheless represent 'simplifications' of what is really happening.

Vignette 1

One school decided to adopt the quality of teaching and learning as the focus for the project. It identified Year 9 (8th grade) as the starting point for a review of current practice. *Enquiry and reflection* was central to the project, as the school wanted to find out about the quality of experience made available to its students. It quickly became clear that the *involvement* of a range of stakeholder groups (teachers, students, parents, the LEA inspection service) would be necessary to build up a meaningful picture, with a range of enquiry methods being used to involve these groups as data collectors as well as sources of data. Preparing teachers for this exercise required a series of *staff development activities*, and, since the project was unlike any

other the school had undertaken, this raised issues about how it should be *co-ordinated* to ensure that it produced worthwhile outcomes.

The exercise generated a lot of valuable data about the quality of student experience, but also unearthed issues relating to the way the school was organised and managed, and to the attitudes of teachers to their students, the school and their work. In particular, it has challenged the notion that senior management have "got the structure right", and that improvements will come from focusing on classrooms alone.

Vignette 2

A second school (following an external review by the LEA) wanted to use the project to spread good practice between departments and teachers, thus eliminating areas of weakness. The project was therefore focused around *staff-development* goals, but soon encountered the need to collect school-based data about existing levels of practice, leading to a major programme of *enquiry* by teachers. As this activity was taken on by different departments and groupings, it began to raise issues about the differences in *leadership* style which could be identified between the various departments.

As a staff development exercise the project was successful, with almost all members of staff being drawn into the project and training objectives and activities were identified which have been tackled on a whole-school basis. However, it also raised questions about management roles, both at senior and middle management levels, and about the gaps which seemed to exist between established policies and routine practice.

Vignette 3

A third school had introduced a series of curriculum co-ordinator posts as part of its strategy for implementing National Curriculum requirements. Nevertheless, progress between subject areas seemed rather uneven, so the project centred on the *leadership* role of the curriculum co-ordinator. This focus involved an *enquiry* into the perceptions different groups and individuals held in relation to the role, and resulted in a series of planned *staff development* sessions for the curriculum co-ordinators, and a whole-school training day.

The headteacher felt that the project had 'moved on the thinking' of co-ordinators, helping them to a clearer understanding of their responsibilities and the school's expectations, and had also resulted in some standardization of procedures and approaches which would help *co-ordination* generally within the school. It seemed to us, however, that the project was pointing to rather more deeply seated organizational problems. The roles of the headteacher and the school's senior management team were lacking the clarification which had been brought to the role of the curriculum co-ordinator. There also seemed to be an expectation that the co-ordinators as individuals would maintain coherence of approach without any structure to support this. Perhaps most interesting was the impression that role clarification was seen as a method for standardizing individual decisions (i.e. increasing central control) rather than as a means of extending the school's creative capacity.

Vignette 4

The fourth example comes from a school which deliberately used *involvement* (in this case of the wider staff group) as a mechanism for identifying the priority which the school would pursue during the project. Promoting effective learning strategies emerged as the area of focus, and (over a two year period) substantial progress was made in this area. A majority of the staff joined task groups in *planning* for a range of learning opportunities across the curriculum, and the strategy of identifying staff from a range of levels to chair these groups encouraged the spread of *leadership*. A number of staff were given the opportunity to *co-ordinate* aspects of the project - the training days to disseminate the findings of task groups, the formation of a school development group, the drafting of departmental guidelines offer some examples of the roles played by co-ordinators as the project progressed.

In addition to the obvious progress made on learning opportunities, the school acknowledges the benefits derived from its involvement in the project - better (more authentic) communication, more widespread participation, more sharing of practice across departments and groups. There have also been some important challenges to the management structure that may, in the short term at least be harder to cope with. For example, the traditional method of decision-making (from "on-high') is being questioned - if a more substantial role for staff at all levels is beneficial for the project then why not in other areas of school life? It has also become clear that the school's current priorities do not coincide with the designated duties and responsibilities of senior staff. There is also a growing reluctance amongst staff to join task groups unless it is clear what the status of any findings or recommendations may be - staff at all levels seem to be more jealous about their time.

Vignette 5

The fifth example is drawn from a school which hoped, through the project, to extend the range of teaching strategies currently used by the staff. The project started with widespread involvement in *enquiry*, via the mapping of teaching approaches and the pairing of staff for reciprocal classroom observation sessions. This activity was adopted as a major *staff development* strategy, with the school's INSET programme being modified and replanned to reflect the priority given to paired observation following the very positive experiences reported by teachers. The school believes that there have already been significant staff development outcomes, not least in the area of co-ordination. It hopes during the next year to develop the project to take in pupil views and responses, and is currently looking at ways of increasing involvement.

The project has however raised a number of issues about consultation within the school - many teachers feel that the senior management 'consult' only after decisions have been taken, and are asking for increased participation in deciding school priorities. There is also a strong feeling that the roles adopted by senior staff relate more to the interface between school and community than the day-to-day needs of teachers for guidance and support. Some staff have suggested that effective 'marketing' of the school will be achieved by improving the quality of education made available to pupils, rather than by investing in relatively expensive promotional literature and activities - questioning whether current policies reflect the real needs in the school.

Re-thinking School Management and Structure

These examples highlight the issues which we are encountering in the majority of our project schools. Though, by systematically working with schools on the conditions identified, we are seeing improvements take place (and the schools themselves report that they are aware of such improvements and developments), nevertheless this increase in 'capacity' is hampered by two main areas of confusion. The first relates to structural problems, the second, to the way the management function is currently perceived in schools. Nevertheless, one outcome from our work with project schools has been that recognition of the shortcomings of such inherited structures increases markedly as the school embarks on improvement effort. The attention we have placed on management arrangements has not merely increased the school's capacity to sustain change, but has most often increased the school's understanding of how it must change, structurally, if it is to support long term improvement work.

At present, the main structural/management problems which improvement work seems to highlight are:

The 'gap' between the senior management team and the school

In a number of the project schools the differences in perception, understanding, values and (sometimes) goals which exist between the senior management team and the bulk of the staff has been striking. Often, senior staff seem not to understand how their own actions will be interpreted within the wider staff group. Sometimes they have been upset as well as surprised by feedback on the way they are seen by colleagues.

The mismatch between school goals/priorities and senior management roles/areas of responsibility

Many project schools have come to realise that the current division of responsibilities amongst senior staff does not reflect the main areas of concern and activity in the school. One consequence of this is difficulty in getting particular decisions made - no-one feels able to act. Another is the conflict that arises when two members of the senior management team both believe a given decision falls within their own purview.

Confusion about management and leadership

There seems to be some feeling that schools should be led, rather than managed. This is a perception shared at all levels in the school, which can be traced back to the smaller importance of the management function prior to the 1988 reforms, and (possibly) to a generation of headteachers who projected their own confusion over this issue in print. We are finding that Project schools are becoming much clearer about the need for both management and leadership at many levels within the school, and that engaging in improvement effort has brought home to these schools how difficult it is to improve a school through 'leadership' in the absence of a clearly worked out management strategy.

The relationship between delegation and empowerment

The project has, in every case, been carried forward by a cadre group within the school who have needed to maintain momentum and to direct the project, while trying to ensure that all staff have been able to have a level of involvement and influence. This raises questions about goals, decision-making procedures and levels of individual autonomy. There is, within several of the schools, a certain vagueness about concepts such as participation and consultation. We have seen, as the project proceeded, growing awareness in these schools that individual empowerment can only be achieved if authority is delegated, and if staff

accept that increasing autonomy over their own working lives will mean reducing their influence over the working lives of others.

Time to manage

There have been a number of instances where those who were best placed to carry an activity forward found that the demands on their time made by existing responsibilities meant they would not be able to do so. Sometimes, and disappointingly, progress has been brought to a halt. But there are a growing number of examples of the schools recognising that restructuring involves creating time to think and to manage at all levels in the school.

The gap between policy and practice

Above all, the enquiries which have been carried forward in the IQEA schools have, time and again, demonstrated that there are significant differences between the school's written policies and day-to-day classroom practice. This has brought home to the project schools the importance of seeing re-structuring not as a policy related activity, but as a practice related one. Unless the management arrangements are grounded in the real experiences of the teachers they will be seen as irrelevant and even antithetical to the aims of school improvement - an exercise which serves the existing 'powerarchy' more than it serves the interests of pupils.

Some tentative propositions about the role of school improvement in re-structuring

As outlined above, the evidence from the IQEA project suggests that a systematic programme for school improvement does have a role to play in the re-structuring of secondary schools in England and Wales. Further, systematic school improvement effort may well induce the school to look critically at structural issues both earlier and in less abstract terms than would otherwise be the case. As a result of our work with the IQEA project schools, a number of propositions about the link between school improvement and school-restructuring are offered.

Proposition One

Schools which engage in systematic school improvement effort are more likely to ground restructuring in the reality of the organisations they are, and less likely to seek organisational 'blue-prints' from elsewhere.

Proposition Two

Schools which engage in systematic school improvement effort are more likely to seek clear links between the goals of the school, the roles of senior staff, and the grouping of activities within the school.

Proposition Three

Schools which engage in systematic school improvement effort are more likely to restructure in a way which spreads decision-making further through the school hierarchy, making wider use of delegation and empowerment.

Proposition Four

Schools which engage in systematic school improvement effort are more likely to link the status of individual jobs with the accountabilities of the individual job-holder.

Proposition Five

Schools which engage in systematic school improvement effort are more likely to create new structures and procedures with a bias towards action, rather than planning.

Proposition Six

Schools which engage in systematic school improvement effort are more likely to see restructuring as a process which needs to support parallel changes in teacher behaviour.

Though these propositions are necessarily tentative at this stage, we hope to be able to subject them to further scrutiny in the next phase of the IQEA programme. We will also be looking to identify at classroom level conditions which parallel those we have been working on to improve management arrangements. There will be little point re-thinking structures and management processes if we do not know how to link these into and bring them to bear on classroom practice.

References:

Ainscow, M. and Muncey, J. (1989). *Meeting Individual Needs in the Primary School*. London: Fulton

Beare, H., Caldwell, J. and Millikan, R.H. (1989). *Creating an Excellent School*. London: Routledge.

Caldwell, B.J. and Spinks, J.M. (1988). *The Self-managing School*. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Fidler, F. and Bowles, G. (1989). *Effective Local Management of Schools*. Harlow: Longman.

Hewton, E. (1988). *School Focused Staff Development: Guidelines for Staff Development*. Lewes: Falmer Press

Huberman, M. and Miles, M. (1984). *Innovation Up Close*. New York: Plenum

Janis, I. (1982). *Groupthink*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Joyce, B. (1992). 'Co-operative learning and staff development research' (mimeo). Aptos, CA: Booksend Laboratories.

Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1984). 'Transfer of training: the contribution of coaching'. In D Hopkins and M Wideen (eds), *Alternative Perspectives on School Improvement*. Lewes: Falmer Press

Levine, D.U. and Lezotte, L.W. (1990). *Unusually Effective Schools: A Review and Analysis of research and Practice*. Madison: National Center for Effective Schools Research.

Louis, K.S. and Miles, M.B. (1990). *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Murphy, J. (1991). *Restructuring Schools: Capturing and Assessing the Phenomena*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Purkey, S.C. and Smith, M.S. (1983). 'Effective schools - a review'. *The Elementary School Journal*, 4, 427-52.

Reynolds, D. (1991). 'Changing ineffective schools'. In M Ainscow (ed.), *Effective Schools for All*. London: Fulton.

Snyder, K.J. and Anderson, R.H. (1986). *Managing Productive Schools: Towards an Ecology*. Orlando FL: Academic Press.

Stoll, L. (1991). 'School effectiveness in action: supporting growth in schools and classrooms'. In M. Ainscow (ed.), *Effective Schools for All*. London: Fulton.

Weick, K.E. (1985). 'Sources of order in underorganised systems: themes in recent organizational theory'. In Y.S. Lincoln (ed.), *Organizational Theory and Inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

West, M. and Ainscow, M. (1991). *Managing School Development: A Practical Guide*. London: Fulton.

Willms, J.D. (1992). *Monitoring School Performance: A Guide for Educators*. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Wilson, B.L. and Corcoran, T.B. (1988). *Successful Secondary Schools*. Lewes: Falmer Press.